

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY
VETERANS' RECOGNITION SUBCOMMITTEE**

Pursuant to Section 19.84, Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Veterans' Recognition Subcommittee** was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at 5:00 p.m., in Room 201 of the Northern Building, 305 E. Walnut Street, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

PRESENT: Chair Erickson, Carl Soderberg, Delores Pierce, Duane Pierce, Ed Koslowski, Jim Haskins, Rosemary Desisles, Jerry Polus, Joe Witkowski, Lynn Geiser, Tracy Rosinski

****Running Total of Veterans' Certificates: 1681**

1. Call Meeting to Order.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bernie Erickson at 5:00 p.m.

2. Invocation.

3. Approve/Modify Agenda.

Chair Bernie Erickson noted that Ken Corry was not in attendance as noted in Item 7, however, Lynn Geiser was in attendance and could be introduced and report at Item 7 instead of Corry.

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Rosemary Desisles to approve the Agenda as amended. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Approve or Modify Minutes of November 19, 2014.

Motion made by Joe Witkowski, seconded by Duane Pierce to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Possible discussion/review regarding Veterans Appreciation Day at the Brown County Fair in preparation for 2015.

Jerry Polus reported that he had spoken with MSG Kelly with the Air Force Band and followed up the conversation by submitting a request for the band to perform at the Appreciation Day at the Fair. He will keep this group advised as to a commitment from the band. Polus continued that somewhere in the April time frame he will invite someone from the female veterans group to sit in on a meeting to discuss the recognition of female veterans at the Fair. This will be added as a standing item on the agenda for the coming months and Polus would like to get the word out to as many female veterans as possible so they can be recognized.

Ed Koslowski stated that he will be inviting the group, Guitar for Vets, to set up a table in the tent at the Fair, but he will make it clear to them that they are not able to solicit donations. Guitars for Vets is a program that provides veterans with guitars and a formula to learn how to play which provides opportunities for self-expression and positive human interaction. This group was founded in Milwaukee in 2007 and now has more than 40 chapters in 20 states.

6. Report from Committee Members Present (Erickson, Desisles, Haskins, Koslowski, Maino, Pierce, Rosinski & Witkowski).

-Erickson reported that he had checked with the City of Green Bay with regard to using the band stand at the Fair and was advised that the cost to rent the band stand would be \$250 - \$500; however, it is not possible for the band stand to be used outside of the city limits. Rosemary Desisles felt that some type of covered stage would be appropriate for weather

reasons. Tracy Rosinski asked about the cost of the band as Heartland has offered to pay for the band but if there is no charge for the band, perhaps they could put the money towards some type of covered stage.

-Rosemary Desisles commented on the fundraiser that was held at The Ravine recently for the Army v. Navy game. She indicated that the event raised several hundred dollars which was good for the first year.

-Jim Haskins reported that he went to the Elks Club on December 5 for a free dinner and program for veterans. It was a good event and he noted that there was a bus of veterans from King in attendance. Haskins estimated that 50 – 60 people attended the program which consisted of several speakers and was followed by a performance by an illusionist. Haskins also stated that he had recently attended the basketball game between Preble and East honoring veterans. He stated that Mayor Schmitt spoke at the event and presented a plaque to Tracy Rosinski for her work with veterans.

Haskins continued that he had recently seen an article regarding how New Orleans ended veteran homelessness. New Orleans is the first city in America to complete First Lady Michelle Obama's Mayors Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness.

Haskins also commented on the Beret Jackson auctions he had seen recently where a 1950 Futureliner was sold for \$4 million dollars with all of the proceeds being donated to the Armed Forces Foundation.

-Ed Koslowski reported that the United Patriotic Society will hold its appreciation dinner on February 16, 2015 at The Woods. Reservations are due by February 2 and the cost to attend is \$13.50 per person. Gwen Green would be the person to contact for further details. The Veteran of the Year award will be given at the event along with several other recognitions.

Koslowski continued that the Hoops for Troops event will be held at Bayport High School on February 13, 2015. Those interested in attending can meet at the VFW at 6:00 p.m. There will be representatives in uniform from each branch of service. This is more of a recognition event than a fundraiser.

-Duane Pierce reported that he had recently had a brief meeting with the man who runs the business district on Military Avenue and interest was expressed in the possibility of closing off Military Avenue for a parade for veterans, possibly on the Fourth of July. Pierce will continue to keep this subcommittee advised in this regard.

-Tracy Rosinski reported that Heartland is looking at getting author Debra Grassman back this spring with the hopes that she can make an appearance at the Veterans Service National Conference in Appleton. She is also hoping to have Grassman do a Soul Injury ceremony.

-Witkowski did not have anything to report other than wishing all members a Happy New Year.

7. Introduction of potential subcommittee member, Ken Corry.

Lynn Geiser reported that a Giving Back to Veterans event will be held on February 28 beginning at noon at the Warpinski Community Center at 515 Monroe Street. The event will include a free meal for veterans along with free warm clothes, free haircuts and free music. A number of different organizations will come together for the event to help veterans.

With regard to Hope for Vets, Geiser is still working on the 501C3 so the winter event and the nursing home events will be mainly donations and volunteers. They do have volunteers that can take monetary donations as well.

Pierce reported that Geiser had an idea to do an Easter basket giveaway for veterans in the three largest area nursing homes which are Parkview Manor, Bornemans and Woodside on the west side. Pierce noted that there are 15 – 20 veterans at each of these facilities and they have scheduled the visits to the nursing homes for March 30 and March 31 and the baskets will be distributed at that time. This event is another way to remember veterans and let them know that they are not forgotten.

Geiser continued that Desisles wants a summer stand down. She noted that this would be a great deal of work and she will keep this group advised. The stand down would be a one or two day event with professionals brought in to assist veterans in various ways. This was done in Milwaukee last year.

Witkowski asked Polus if he had a master list of women veterans in the County and Polus indicated that he could obtain that information. Erickson also noted that he has spoken with several female veterans he has run into and they will also help get the word out.

8. Report from CVSO Jerry Polus.

Polus reported on Veterans Court and noted that they had two graduates last week, including the first female member. The Veterans Court continues to have a high level of success and Polus would appreciate continued support for the program. He noted that there has not been any recidivism among the participants and the program has seen 15 – 16 graduates so far.

9. Comments from Carl Soderburg.

Carl Soderberg reported that the biggest issue he has been hearing about is the Veterans Choice card which allows veterans to receive non-VA care if there is not VA care available within a 40 mile radius or if the wait time for services at a VA facility is more than 30 days. Problem areas are in northern Door County as these people are technically within 40 miles of the Menominee Clinic as the crow flies, however, a boat would be needed to get there. Congressman Ribble continues to make inquiries as to changing this regulation. Polus indicated that he spoken with the VA in Milwaukee on this and that it is somewhat of a confusing program as some veterans believe that the card allows them to receive care at non-VA facilities, however, this is not the case. The program was designed for those areas that are more remote, such as in the state of Wyoming. Polus was advised that there are only a few areas in Wisconsin that really are not within 40 miles of a VA facility. Polus indicated that veterans should call the toll free number on the back of their cards for clarification.

The other item Soderberg reported on was an e-mail he had received from Dave Kurtz of the American Legion regarding the Wounded Warrior Project. The e-mail indicated that Guidestar, a charity rating service, indicated that Wounded Warrior Project spends an extremely high amount of their money on themselves and very little gets to the veterans. Pierce indicated that he has heard figures that anywhere from 20 – 60% is retained by the organization instead of being used to help veterans. He indicated that he had also received an e-mail on this that referred to the Wounded Warrior Project as “an illegal scam”. Soderberg continued that the Guidestar report states that over \$155 million was taken in and about \$5 million dollars, or 3.5%, was given to veterans.

10. Such Other Matters as Authorized By Law.

Copies of the poem Jim Haskins wrote, *All Gave Some, Some Gave All*, were printed and distributed to the subcommittee. Erickson will have a copy of the poem framed to be hung in Room 201.

Pierce also advised the Subcommittee that an older gentleman dressed in a Marine uniform attended the event at the Fair last year asking to be in the tent but Pierce advised him that donations were not accepted in the tent. Pierce has recently heard that this same gentleman

was at a Packer game soliciting donations but had been arrested for fraud as he was not a veteran and had never been in the military service.

11. **Adjourn.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Joe Witkowski to adjourn at 5:44 p.m. Vote taken.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio
Recording Secretary